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Foreign Affairs and Domestic Obstacles.

S P E E C H

OF

HON. WILLIAM ALDEN SMITH,
OF MICHIGAN,

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1900.

WASHINGTON.

1900.



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Foreign Affairs and Domestic Obstacles.

SPEECH

OF

HON. WILLIAM ALDEN SMITH.

The House being in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, and having under consideration the bill (H. R. 7941) making appropriations for the diplomatic and consular service for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1901—

Mr. WM. ALDEN SMITH said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The bill under consideration makes an appropriation for the consular and diplomatic service of our country. No more important measure will be presented for our consideration. Very little attention has thus far been given in debate to the specific provisions of the bill, the result of patient and laborious care on the part of the committee, and especially commendable to the distinguished and able chairman.

Many suggestions have been made by members of the committee and others during its preparation, looking to the improvement of the foreign service; and I have no doubt whatever, but for the rule which prevents new legislation on general appropriation bills, some of these suggestions might have met with favor.

Notice was given to the committee of my desire to incorporate a new provision in the bill authorizing a minister resident to the Orange Free State and the South African Republic, not for the purpose of adding to our perplexities, but because of the growing importance of our relations to those countries and the desire to afford to the President, whenever he might think proper, this wider latitude for diplomatic relationship.

Realizing the hostility of our committee to this plan in the present bill, and the fruitlessness of such an effort in the face of a single objection, which I am advised will be forthcoming, I have concluded not to press the matter in violation of the rules, with

which every member is supposed to be familiar, but shall content myself by bringing in a bill in the usual and orderly way.

✓ Mr. Chairman, much discussion has been going on in the public press and in Congress regarding our foreign affairs and much about the foreign affairs of other countries. It is not my purpose to traverse these well-worn paths, but to briefly point out the difficulties of our position and fix some of the responsibility therefor.

A very large and representative element in our country has placed itself in opposition to the annexation of new territory by the United States whenever it has been attempted in the past. There was much respectable opposition to the annexation of Louisiana, Texas, and that vast empire of the West now constituting a veritable bulwark of American States; opposition loud and demonstrative against the cherished idea of President Grant to make Santo Domingo a part of the American Union, when it was offered to our country merely for the asking and defeated out of pure spite by a tie vote in the Senate—that rich gem of the Caribbean Sea, the natural resting place and rendezvous of our West Indian fleet.

The distinguished representative of this Government in the Hawaiian Islands under the Administration of President Harrison, and at a critical juncture in the affairs of that Pacific territory, raised the American flag with the concurrence of the authorities of the Hawaiian group.

These islands had long been under the care and protection of our country. European powers understood that our interests were paramount there, and no other government regarded these islands as open to conquest. The attitude of our country was hailed with delight and satisfaction by the people there, and for the first time they felt themselves relieved from the doubt and anxiety of maintaining public order.

President Harrison promptly submitted a treaty of annexation to the Senate, but before it was acted upon the Administration changed. The Democratic party came into power; the treaty of annexation was withdrawn and a commissioner with paramount authority dispatched to these islands to connive and thwart the manifest purpose of his predecessor.

The country well remembers the unjustifiable conduct of the

Democratic party at that time, and it disapproved this backward step. So soon as an opportunity was presented, the wrong done by Commissioner Blount was remedied, and these islands came legally, effectively, permanently within the legal limits of our sovereignty. [Applause.]

Were we wise in this action? Everyone now admits it. The danger of hostile attack upon our western coast has been reduced, and no foreign fleet hovers about this Pacific stronghold prepared to dash upon our coast at the slightest provocation.

The dream and hope and expectation of our statesmen, strategists, and sailors received its final consummation when annexation became an accomplished fact. Is there a man upon the other side of this Chamber who has the temerity to now rise in his place and say that he regrets the course pursued by the Republican party in this matter?

When the last revolution of the Cuban people was at its height; when they were entitled to belligerent rights under every rule of international law; when they had held at bay 200,000 soldiers, the flower of the Spanish army, and had driven back to Spain every prominent general who had been sent over for the purpose of accomplishing the pacification of the island; when they had maintained a separate government for upward of three years and the island was torn with war, devastated with fire and famine, and depopulated with disease and starvation from end to end; who was it that opposed their recognition as belligerents? Why, of course, it was a Democratic President, and his action was sustained for many months by his party in the Congress of the United States. The prayer of the struggling, the parched lips of the dying, the cry of distress from women and little children, were not heard until the Democratic party was retired from power and the Republican party installed in its place. [Applause.]

From what source does this wail of political opposition to the annexation of the Philippine Islands come? Who is it that finds most fault and is loudest in denunciation of our conduct? No less a personage than the late leader of the Democratic party in a fruitless Presidential contest, who, if my memory serves me right, was, if it be a crime, *particeps criminis* in our action in this regard, for he not only enlisted in the Army to put down the power

of Spain, knowing that the fruits of war would dispossess her of her territory wherever it was the disposition of this Government to strike, but he could scarcely wait to be discharged before he posted off to Washington to advise the hesitating and halting Democrats in the United States Senate that they should ratify the Paris treaty of peace, which provided that the Philippine Archipelago, Puerto Rico, and the island of Guam should become part of the territory of the United States [applause], and providing also for the payment of the \$20,000,000 agreed upon in this convention. How often since, with a brazenness and effrontery unequalled, has he berated the Government and its high officers for doing the very thing which he himself advised and to which he was a party?

From what source does this criticism come, I ask again, for our policy as to the Philippine Islands and Puerto Rico and Guam? It comes from the disorganized, disordered, distracted organization represented upon the other side of this Chamber, occasionally sprinkled with a few well-meaning but misguided and mischievous critics, who, having taken a wrong position, have not the courage to change it.

When the declaration of war was made with Spain it contained a proposition binding upon our Government a certain course of conduct with reference to the future government of Cuba. I regretted that condition then and I regret it now. From what source did that provision emanate? It was tacked on to the declaration in the Senate of the United States by a Populistic Senator as a mere sop to the jealous powers of Europe.

Who are they, Mr. Chairman, who have upon every occasion given aid and comfort to the enemies of our country in rebellion against the flag borne so bravely by Lawton and Logan and the soldiers of our Union in that far-off land? Democrats, Populists. Sir, they have criticised the President for not acting earlier in Cuba; have criticised the President for acting at all in the Philippines. We can not satisfy them. They urged us to war with Spain before the country was ready, and want us to stop before we are through. The Democratic party were eager for our soldiers to go into Cuba and, lo and behold, are as eager for them to get out. You are a party of negation, fault-finding, demagoguery, and demoralization.

You complain of the treaty of peace, ratified under the whip and spur of public opinion, many Democrats being forced to vote therefor; and now, with sublime impudence, you arise here upon every occasion to find fault with us for occupying the ceded territory. Consistency, thou art a jewel, but indeed rare upon the other side of this Chamber. [Applause.]

Complaining of our embroilment in the affairs of the far east, to which point you say we have unlawfully stretched the Constitution, you now seek to involve our country in the affairs of the South African Republic. Can we safely be governed by their advice? When has it been wise and helpful? I pause for a reply, and "the only answer is the echo of your wailing cry."

You accuse us of making an alliance with England. What for? The occasion does not exist, and the desire is not present in the heart or mind of any worthy public official. The charge is baseless, unworthy its authors, and intended merely as a cheap scarecrow to alarm timid people.

The only alliance known to me between England and the United States was dissolved yesterday by mutual agreement. It was made before the Republican party was born, and is known as the Clayton-Bulwer treaty, providing for the joint use and occupation of a canal across the Isthmus. It was an ill-gotten child and nobody regrets its demise.

Alliance with England! Intangible, indefinite, indistinct hallucination, born in the small brain of a distorted demagogue for political purposes in this campaign only! [Applause.]

For several weeks past the tender sympathies of the American people have been aroused and their interest excited in the unjustifiable war now being waged by England in South Africa. Public meetings have been held, resolutions of sympathy adopted, and funds raised to ameliorate suffering and distress—all commendable, praiseworthy manifestations of the federation of mankind and humanity's interest in humanity, though seas divide and continents separate. [Applause.]

Demonstrations of this character are cosmopolitan, embracing Americans, native and foreign born, but whether of Dutch, German, Irish, Scandinavian, or Polish descent, they vie equally with one another in upholding the right and condemning the wrong.

Their love of liberty may have been born in the throes of revolution. The ax of the Duke of Alva may have been made crimson with the blood of ancestors spotless in the sight of heaven, or their native soil despoiled and they driven forth into the world without a country, save, perhaps, this God-given land of their adoption where the bright bow of promise lured them. Emigrants though they were, they have been true and loyal to the country through storm and trial.

I have the honor to represent upon this floor more Holland-Americans than any member here. They are among the best citizens of our Commonwealth. Honest, sturdy, self-reliant, frugal, they plod the weary path of life with hope as their guiding star and faith in the life to come.

Sirs, I would consider myself unworthy to represent them here if for a moment I yielded to the precipitate pressure of the over-zealous or did any act that might in its consequences place our country in a false light in the eyes of the world, involve the destruction of the salutary doctrine enunciated by Monroe, or lessen the feeling of security now enjoyed by all classes of our citizenship. A man in the private walks of life is responsible only to his conscience—may give expression to his feelings unrestrained—but those charged with official responsibility must never forget that no matter how many are pro-English or pro-Boer, it is his bounden duty under the Constitution he has sworn to uphold to be openly, avowedly, loyally pro-American. [Applause.]

Gentlemen upon the other side of this Chamber mistake the character of those sympathizing with the Boer and underestimate their love of liberty and devotion to America if they think these sturdy men would for an instant imperil our institutions or impair the security of our homes, the peace of our firesides, or cast discredit upon our Government by any hasty, unwise, unlawful, or premature act.

Yesterday upon this floor, in the heat of debate, a distinguished and able Representative, after detailing the conquests of England, expressed the wish that this last war in South Africa might work the beginning of the end of the British Empire. Shame! Shame! Would you welcome the fall of a vast empire, bringing wreck and ruin upon the millions of peasants and yeomanry who are

only temporarily represented by a foreign secretary, bent upon his present unholy mission? Far, far more preferable be it said that Joseph Chamberlain misinterprets the will of the English people. Public sentiment does not sustain him at home, and the wide, wide world is encircled with disapproval.

The ministry overstepped when they undertook to interfere in the domestic affairs of the South African Republic. I need not go to the other side of this Chamber for witnesses. I can summon to the bar of public opinion many of the foremost statesmen of England. Take, for example, the uncontradicted statements of James Brice, W. T. Stead, of Sir William Vernon-Harcourt, the great Liberal leader of England and formerly in the cabinet of Gladstone, who says:

That convention as it was called, of 1881, reserved to Great Britain the right of veto upon treaties with foreign states. Secondly, in regard to its internal administration, it limited, in a certain degree, the internal government and autonomy of the Transvaal State, but as Lord Derby, who was then colonial secretary, stated (I give his words), "In all other respects entire freedom of action was accorded not inconsistent with the rights expressly reserved," so that in the convention of 1881—follow me here—it was in that first convention of 1881 the independence so limited was expressed by the word suzerainty, a vague word, but one which was employed in that convention of 1881.

Then as for the new convention. You have a convention in which the word "suzerainty" has disappeared. You have a reservation of the control of this country over the treaty relations of the Transvaal, and what was the result of that new convention? The result of that new convention was stated by Lord Derby; and now this is a very important statement. He said:

"By the omission of those articles in the convention of 1881, which assigned to Her Majesty and the British Government certain specific powers and functions connected with the internal government and the foreign relations, your Government will be left free to govern the country without interference, to conduct its diplomatic intercourse and shape its foreign policy, subject only to the requirements embodied in the fourth article of the new draft that any treaty with a foreign state shall not have effect without the approval of the Queen."

Therefore, I think you may take it with absolute certainty that the new convention of 1884 was this: It kept the control of foreign affairs under the veto of the British Government, and in respect of their internal affairs struck out the word "suzerainty," leaving or giving to the people of the Transvaal absolute internal authority—home rule, in fact, for themselves.

Why should we copy an old preamble in a new convention? In the preamble of 1884 the word "suzerainty" disappears, and it is not found in any of the articles of that convention. This may seem rather technical to you, but it really lies at the bottom of what is at issue to-day. * * *

Mr. W. H. Smith, who was the respected leader of the House of Commons, as the representative of that Government, said:

"The convention of London made in 1884 between Her Majesty and the South African Republic contains no express reservation of the Queen's right

of suzerainty; and though Her Majesty retains under the convention the power of refusing to sanction the treaties made by the South African Republic with foreign states and nations and with certain native tribes, the cardinal principle of that settlement [mark this] was that the internal government and legislation of the South African Republic shall not be interfered with. What is the use of talking of the existing of suzerainty over their international affairs reserved in the preamble of the convention of 1881 which was done away with by the convention of 1884?"

Clearly no legal right existed in Great Britain to regulate the suffrage laws and fix new qualifications for electors. This was a domestic affair, to be regulated by the Government of the Transvaal.

In his dispatch of December 31, 1895, Mr. Chamberlain defined the South African Republic as "a foreign State which is in friendly treaty relations with Great Britain."

Again, on May 8, 1896, he said in the House of Commons.

To go to war with President Kruger in order to force upon him reform in internal affairs of his State, in which secretaries of state, standing in this place, have repudiated all right of interference—that would be a course of action as immoral as it would be unwise.

To whom shall he now answer for this deplorable war, with its fearful loss of life? To high heaven and his country and mankind. Once aroused, the common sense of England will hurl him from his high office and, following the example of Gladstone, "whose wisdom still rules us from its urn," will halt her troops, wherever scattered, and bid them return to the constitutional and legal limits of her lawful domain.

Gentlemen upon the other side have upon the rostrum and in this presence said it was our duty to interfere. The gentleman from Colorado [Mr. SHAFROTH] says it is our duty to offer mediation. Mr. Chairman, such doctrine is unknown in the law of nations, and such course upon our part would properly subject us to the charge of unwarranted meddlesomeness. We do not know that our offer would be acceptable to either party. The Boers, who have shown a disposition to take care of themselves, have not asked us to interfere, while Great Britain bears her defeats without complaining. Where does our duty lie?

Much as we deplore war, sincerely as we would welcome peace, the war is not of our making and our sympathies must not be permitted to involve us.

While Secretary, Daniel Webster thus wrote to the President in 1852, as follows:

It has never been the purpose of the Government of the United States to interpose, directly or indirectly, in the affairs of the States of Central America, with a view to settle the controversies between them by any influence whatsoever exercised by this Government without their request or free consent.

Mr. Everett, Secretary of State, in writing to Sir Edward Thornton, the British minister, in September, 1879, apropos of the proposition to join with Great Britain and Germany in offering their mediation in the war then pending between Chili and Peru, made the following statement:

I am able to say, however, that our ministers have given and are giving attention to the wishes of this Government to procure its good offices in favor of peace at the earliest indication of the readiness of the belligerents to consider such good offices acceptable.

Our course is plain. We must await events or expose our own country to criticism and possibly obloquy. The Boers in South Africa seem amply able to take care of themselves. [Applause.] And I hope and trust that no false sentimentality will prompt our country to enter upon any other course than will be creditable to it now and in the future. I would not have England crush the Boers; neither do I wish for England calamity within her proper and legitimate domain, and I do not believe the most ultra pro-Boer in the United States wishes any such destiny for that great Empire across the sea.

Why, Mr. Chairman, what does it mean? It means that the policy of the colonial secretary, Mr. Chamberlain, is to bring down upon the heads of the common people of England the failure and fall of their country and their Government. Any man or party or set of men who would wish such an end for the British Empire is thoughtless indeed. Are you talking for mere party advantage?

How unjustifiable. Who constitutes the British Empire? Not Sir Joseph Chamberlain alone, but Sir William Vernon Harcourt as well and those whom he represents as the great leader of so many thousands of Liberals who oppose and think unwise the policy of Mr. Chamberlain in this crisis.

Why, Mr. Chairman, would the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. CLARK] bring down ruin upon the common people of England? Great in her history, great in her sober, steady yeomanry, it is

not the mere temporary representative in power, but it is the common people behind that representative, for whom I speak; and much as my sympathies go out to the Boers, much as I believe England to be wrong in this controversy, much as I believe that history will hold her forever the unlawful aggressor in the field of her present military operations, still I do wish for England honor, fame, and renown as a country, because I believe in the ultimate glorious destiny of the Anglo-Saxon race.

Mr. Chairman, I am well aware of the fact that the President has been urged again and again to mediate in this controversy. The gentleman from Colorado [Mr. SHAFROTH] holds that he has this power of mediation at any time. A close reading of international law throws doubt upon this proposition. Indeed, if he goes according to the rule of nations, he must wait until one of the parties to the contest or both of them ask him to mediate or intervene.

I find in this resolution which I hold in my hand, passed by over 4,000 citizens of my home city at Grand Rapids, at a pro-Boer meeting, sympathizing strongly, as does every lover of liberty the world over, with the Boers—I find in the closing paragraph of this arraignment of Great Britain and her course a provision that the President shall be requested to mediate and offer his good offices “whenever it may be done within the rules of international law,” and I am ready to await the action of the President. I am eager to follow in his lead. He can be trusted to do what is right, both for our country and for others, should they ask mediation.

Many of us recall how we urged the President to take early action with reference to Cuba. Committees were appointed from this House to wait upon him and urge him that civilization and the people of the country wanted him to act. But he waited, with thoughtful hesitation, not wishing to be rushed unduly into a scene the end of which no man could foretell. And I recall how, sitting around his Cabinet table one day, members of this House urged him to act promptly and vigorously.

I know one gentleman, now in my hearing, who said to him, “Mr. President, those torpedo boats are upon the high sea. They will soon menace our harbors. We must have protection for our coast cities. We think it is time for you to act.” I recall the re-

ply, as do others sitting near me, when the President said, "You ask me to act. You say you are afraid of the torpedo boats now upon the sea and headed for our country. Give yourself no uneasiness, sir. While I do not propose to go to war if it can be avoided, while I pray to God that we may be absolved from this terrible thing—I know what war is—while I shall not shrink from it if it comes, but would be saved from it if possible, if those torpedo boats come to our country our American Navy will take care of them, sir. Give yourself no uneasiness upon that point." [Applause.]

And so they did: and I recall with what splendid composure the President awaited the final outcome, while many were criticising him. Indeed, in some sections of the country he was hung in effigy. In the theaters his name was hissed; but splendidly, superbly, with great composure, he stood at the helm in the midst of the storm and awaited the final outcome. And when the time came to act, he acted in harmony with that judgment of which he alone seems to be capable, and met every situation that confronted the country with matchless tact and great ability, which covered our country with glory and imperishable renown. [Applause.] That we were wiser in his leadership than we should have been without it everyone now concedes. That he was supremely right and met the full measure of his responsibility all admit.

Now, Mr. Chairman, in this exigency, when he is asked to intervene, when he is asked to mediate, when he is asked to take action, shall we await the ripened judgment of his splendid mind, equal to every emergency, or shall we unduly force him when it is unnecessary? For my part, I am willing to follow the President.

If he ever sees the time when he thinks it will be appropriate to intervene, so may it be; but until that time comes I do not believe there is a single citizen of my district or State, I do not believe there is a single person in the United States, who, down deep in his heart, would have the President act otherwise than according to his own best judgment. He has led the country through many a perilous period. He will do it again. Thank God, I have never yet in the course of my life felt called upon to

criticise in severe or harsh language any President of the United States. My respect for that high office prompts me to pause, and my respect for its present occupant would not permit severe criticism or abuse to be hurled at him without making an attempt in his defense.

He is our President, no matter what political party puts him in power. He is the President of the whole people; and it ill becomes any citizen of the country to abuse him without cause. [Applause on the Republican side.] The burden of the President of the United States is heavy enough without our adding greater or more onerous ones for him to carry. The people of my district do not desire to embarrass the President, and our Democratic friends on the other side should not do so merely to meet the requirements of political exigencies. [Applause on the Republican side.]

Mr. Chairman, why do not our Democratic opponents criticise something in the Administration of President McKinley at home? Not a single word of criticism upon the tariff law, which a special session of Congress put upon the statute books, reviving industry and giving employment to labor; not a single criticism about any of our internal affairs chargeable to the President. Instead, they carry us far out into the Pacific and to the Sulu Islands.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Will the gentleman allow me to ask him a question?

Mr. WM. ALDEN SMITH. The farther away their inquiry is directed the better the excuse for heaping opprobrium upon the President and his party.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Will my friend allow me to ask him a question?

Mr. WM. ALDEN SMITH. Certainly.

Mr. RICHARDSON. I understand you are ready to follow the President on the questions of the day. I want to ask the gentleman if he is going with him in recommending free trade for Puerto Rico, or is he going to vote to tax them at 25 per cent?

Mr. WM. ALDEN SMITH. Yes.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Then you will not go with the President.

Mr. WM. ALDEN SMITH. Yes; I am with the President,

and follow his leadership, because I believe it inspired by the highest wisdom and loftiest patriotism.

Mr. RICHARDSON. He has recommended free trade, and the committee recommend 25 per cent tax. Are you going to vote for that, or are you going to vote for free trade and be with the President?

Mr. WM. ALDEN SMITH. I am going to stand with the President.

Mr. RICHARDSON. That is all right.

Mr. WM. ALDEN SMITH (continuing). The leader of our party and the embodiment of more wisdom than will ever be gathered up from all the cohorts of the Democracy of the North, East, South, or West. [Applause on the Republican side and in the galleries.]

The CHAIRMAN. Applause in the galleries is not permissible.

Mr. RICHARDSON. I am glad the gentleman is with us in that.

Mr. WM. ALDEN SMITH. Mr. Chairman, I reassert that they have not made a criticism upon our domestic affairs upon which they dare to go to the country in the next Presidential election. They know that factories have been opened as well as the mints. They know that the country is prosperous. We know it. From every State represented on the other side of this Chamber the uncontradicted testimony comes, while the great industries of my home city were never more prosperous.

Twice a year the buyers of furniture throughout the United States make their way to the city of Grand Rapids. In the past, 300 buyers, representing as many cities, filled the measure of our realization; but this year, this great year of Republican prosperity, over 800 buyers, from States represented on the other side of the Chamber as well as this, have gone there to buy the handiwork of our genius. [Applause.]

You can not stop this march of progress; you can not cripple the prosperity of our land. You know that your efforts are futile, and so you perch yourselves upon a very lofty plane and criticise our policy in the farthest nook of the world with which we may possibly have some temporary relation.

No, Mr. Chairman, the Democratic party will never succeed by



misrepresentations. The country is too wise: it knows their methods; it knows the results of their government, and they will avoid you as surely as the time comes to test our strength. Will they nominate for President their last and only leader? Will he say that the annexation or attempted annexation in the Philippine Islands was unwise, when he fought to obtain this identical conquest? He advocated the payment of this money and he advocated the ratification of the treaty which meant the annexation of these islands. Will he go to the country upon a platform that he was or is opposed to that policy? The country will see through his sham.

No, Mr. Chairman, this is too great a country for small evasions. The people are too sincere and devoted to it to be trifled with. Our struggles are our chaplets woven in the woof of history. Mankind the world over shares in our triumphs. Where we think and act, and by action change into reality the dreams of optimists who love their fellows; where by suffering we wring from defeat the glories of victory, it seems to the listening nations of an awakened world that our heroic efforts are glorified and graced by the approval of heaven itself and redound to the benefit of the whole human race, and the spectacle is shown of the Giant of the West, with burnished shield and drawn sword, standing in the midst of the nations of earth as the champion of the oppressed, the defender of the weak, and the acknowledged arbiter of the eternal right.

It was once said of the resurrection of Greece and the cession by Great Britain of Crete, Thessaly, Epirus, and the Ionian Isles, "Thus did the old Hellas arise from the grave of nations; scorched by fire, riddled by shot, baptized by blood, she emerged victorious from the conflict. She achieved her independence because she proved herself worthy of it. She was trained to manhood in the only school of real improvement—the school of suffering." Thus our country was born, cradled, and reared, and for the incarnation of this mighty spirit I follow willingly and gladly the matchless leadership of William McKinley, President of an indissoluble and united country. [Great applause.]

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